

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LAGOS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 060412

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PDOR, NI

SUBJECT: MEA ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL MISSION CONTACTS

REF: LAGOS 02253

1. DEPARTMENT SHARES EMBASSY'S CONCERN ABOUT IMPACT OF RESTRICTIONS REPORTED REFTEL ON MISSION'S OPERATIONS AND ABOUT NEED TO SELECTIVELY RESIST THEM. ALSO CONCUR BEST APPROACH FOR TIME BEING IS FOR EMBASSY GENERALLY TO ADHERE TO PRESENT METHODS OF OPERATION VIS-A-VIS MEA WHILE AVOIDING ANY HIGHLY VISIBLE ACTIONSTHAT MIGHT PRECIPITATE FOLLOW-ON DEMARCHE.

2. DEPARTMENT UNDERSTANDS THERE IS LONG STANDING REQUIREMENT HONORED AT LEAST BY LARGER EMBASSIES IN LAGOS WHICH REQUIRES THAT OFFICIAL, FORMAL CALLS BY SENIOR EMBASSY OFFICERS ON GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS BE ARRANGED BY MEA. ALTHOUGH SOMETIMES CUMBERSOME, BELIEVE EMBASSY SHOULD CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THAT PRACTICE. THUS, FOR EXAMPLE, CHIEF OF MISSION OR OTHER SENIOR EMBASSY OFFICERS CALLING ON
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MINISTRIES ON INSTRUCTIONS OR ESCORTING VISITING DELEGATIONS

WOULD ARRANGE APPOINTMENTS THROUGH MEA. VARIOUS DEGREES OF GREY AREA OCCUR IN LESS FORMAL, MORE UNOFFICIAL AND MORE FREQUENT CALLS ON NIGERIAN OFFICIALS, ESPECIALLY AT

LOWER WORKING LEVEL. MUCH WILL DEPEND ON EMBASSY OFFICERS' PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH NIGERIAN OFFICIALS INVOLVED. WHILE NO HARD AND FAST GUIDELINES CAN BE DEvised, DEPARTMENT BELIEVES EMBASSY SHOULD CONTINUE IN LOW PROFILE MANNER DIRECT, INFORMAL CONTACT WITH NON-MEA OFFICIALS WHERE NECESSARY FOR EFFECTIVE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS AND WITH WHOM PATTERN OF DIRECT CONTACTS LONG ESTABLISHED AND WELCOMED. AFTER BUSINESS HOURS, INFORMAL DIRECT CONTACTS SHOULD ALSO BE MAINTAINED AND CULTIVATED AT ALL LEVELS. MEANWHILE, EMBASSY SHOULD PERIODICALLY SEEK OUT SOME OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTACTS ARRANGED VIA MEA IN ACCORDANCE WITH ABOVE GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

3. LABOR OFFICER DIRECT CONTACT WITH LABOR UNIONS POSES MORE DIFFICULT PROBLEM. WHILE PRINCIPLE OF ACCESS TO PRIVATE SECTOR OF SOCIETY IS IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN IN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH NON-TOTALITARIAN GOVERNMENTS, LABOR OFFICER, AS EMBASSY ALREADY APPRECIATES, MUST REMAIN SENSITIVE TO WHAT MAY BE FLUCTUATING DEGREES OF CONCERN OF FMG TO POLITICAL DIMENSION OF LABOR UNIONS. AT PERIODS OF GREAT FMG CONCERN, INITIATIVE FOR DIRECT CONTACTS MIGHT BETTER COME FROM LABOR OFFICERS' LONG ESTABLISHED CONTACTS WITHIN LABOR UNIONS. AT SAME TIME, FMG SHOULD APPRECIATE THAT EMBASSY HAS LEGITIMATE RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP DEPARTMENT INFORMED OF OVERALL LABOR SCENE AS IT AFFECTS OUR LEGITIMATE INTERESTS IN KNOWING ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL PICTURE OF NIGERIA.

4. DEPARTMENT CONCURS IN EMBASSY DECISION PARA 8 REFTEL RE EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE GRANTS INVOLVING GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

5. DEPARTMENT APPRECIATES WIDE GREY AREA EMBASSY LEFT TO OPERATE IN, BUT BELIEVES BEST COURSE IS TO PROCEED IN LOW PROFILE, PRAGMATIC WAY IN HOPE THAT MEA IN PRACTICE WILL NOT OBJECT TO WORKING LEVEL, ESSENTIAL DIRECT
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CONTACTS PROVIDED MEA PRIMACY ACKNOWLEDGED IN EMBASSY'S SENIOR LEVEL OFFICIAL CONTACTS. ASSUME EMBASSY WILL COMPARE NOTES WITH BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION AND ADVISE DEPARTMENT. PREFER CHARGE NOT INITIATE FURTHER DISCUSSIONS WITH MEA ON THIS SUBJECT PENDING WHATEVER DISCUSSIONS FMG MAY WISH TO RAISE WITH AMBASSADOR EASUM.

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